

## Willowbrook: A Grim View

By JOSH FRIEDMAN

A Wisconsin nurse who has evaluated over 40 institutions for the mentally retarded said in Brooklyn Federal Court today that the Willowbrook State School is "one of the worst I've ever seen."

"There's no use of new techniques or approaches. There's not enough staff. There's not enough food or supplies. It's filthy," said Patricia McNelly, who spent three days at Willowbrook last month.

Mrs. McNelly described Willowbrook in the second day of a federal civil trial on conditions in the institution.

### A Group Action

The class action suit was brought by a group of parents and two organizations representing retarded persons.

They are asking Federal Judge Orrin Judd to order the state "to provide just

minimally adequate care" to residents at Willowbrook.

The state contends it is doing its best.

Mrs. McNelly is a prosecution witness. She has evaluated institutions for the Joint Commission on Hospital Accreditation which has sent her throughout the country. She has toured European institutions for the World Health Organization and directs nursing services at a school for the retarded in Madison, Wis.

Mrs. McNelly, who participated in drawing up the commission's guidelines for schools for the retarded, said the key to solving Willowbrook's problems would be an increase in skilled personnel.

### A Team Approach

She has helped develop a "team approach" at other institutions which increases

staff contact with residents, she said.

"Within a year and sometimes less residents improved markedly," she testified.

Mrs. Nelly added that, according to the commission's guidelines, Willowbrook has only about a third of the registered and licensed practical nurses it needs.

"And they don't seem to be recruiting new nurses although the New York area produces more new nurses than any other part of the country," she said.

The result of the staff shortage, Mrs. McNelly testified, is a decline of most of Willowbrook's residents.

"There's no way of holding what little the residents had when they came in. They're just allowed to deteriorate," she told the court.